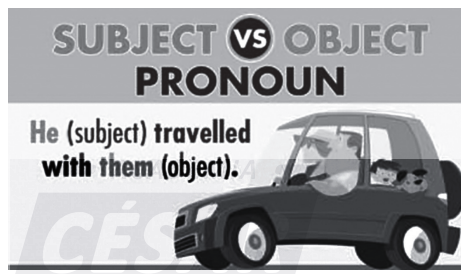


Pronouns

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Subject vs. Object Pronouns

The correct use of subject and object pronouns can be challenging to remember. English teachers and professors all across the globe explain the use and misuse of a pronoun, where it goes in a particular sentence, and why it is being used over a regular noun. A quick review will remind you to look for the subject and the action in the sentence, and then the pronoun will not be far behind.



Purpose of a Pronoun

In the English language, pronouns are used to help minimize repetition in everyday language. Take, for instance, the sentence "The boy went to school." If the phrase "the boy" had to be used every single time the same young man is referenced, there would be too much repetition of the same phrase. Every time the phrase "the boy" is repeated, it takes away from the originality of the sentence and the listener becomes bored. Pronouns let writers and speakers change things up a bit. The pronoun "he" can be substituted for "the boy" in some instances.

Two Types of Pronouns: Subject vs. Object

Pronouns are used to substitute for nouns that are the subject of the sentence as well as nouns that are the object of the sentence. Discover the difference between subject vs. object pronouns.

Subject Pronouns

Subject pronouns are exactly what they sound like; they are pronouns that replace the subject in the sentence. Once you understand what a subject is, it will be very easy to tell what type of pronoun to replace it with.

- Consider the sentence, "**The boy** traveled with friends." In this sentence, "the boy" is performing the action, which means that the boy is the subject.
- If you want to use a pronoun to replace this subject, choose the best subject pronoun for this sentence.
- The subject pronouns are **we, you, he, she, it, and they.**
- Read the sentence out loud to yourself and instead of saying "the boy," try replacing the subject with one of the pronouns. In this example, a good subject pronoun would be "he." The sentence becomes "**He** traveled with friends."

Object Pronouns

Object pronouns are not the same as subject pronouns. They do not replace the subject. Instead, an object pronoun would replace the object in the sentence. The object is the part of the sentence that is being done to, from or with the action.

- Consider the sentence, "The boy traveled with **friends**." The object of this sentence is "friends."
- To replace "friends" with a pronoun, choose the best word from the list of object pronouns.
- The object pronouns are **me, you, him, her, it, us, and them**.
- Select an appropriate object pronoun to replace "friends." You could say "The boy traveled with **them**." Another option would be to say, "The boy traveled with **us**." Both options could be correct, depending on what actually took place.

Dual-Duty Pronouns

The pronouns "you" and "it" can function as either subject or object pronouns in a sentence, depending on how they are used. In the examples below, the underlined pronouns function as subjects and the bold pronouns function as objects.

- Did you bake that cake? **It** is delicious.
- Did it rain today?
- I gave **it** to you yesterday.
- You can drive my car after **you** get a driver's license.

Singular vs. Plural

Both subject and object pronouns can be singular or plural.

- If the subject is "the boy," the pronoun is singular. This is because the pronoun refers to only one person.
- If the subject is, "the children," the pronoun is plural. This is because the pronoun refers to more than one person.

Subject vs. Object pronouns

Pronoun	Subject or Object	Singular or Plural
I	subject	singular
he	subject	singular
she	subject	singular
we	subject	plural
they	subject	plural
you	object or subject	singular or plural
it	object or subject	singular
him	object	singular
her	object	singular
me	object	singular
us	object	plural
them	object	plural

Singular Subject Pronoun Examples

The following examples illustrate each of the **singular subject pronouns**, which are **I**, **he** and **she**. **It** and **you** sometimes function as this type of pronoun.

- **I** went to the store yesterday.
- **He** is babysitting his little sister.
- **She** is planning to study all weekend.
- **You** are not very funny.
- **It** is very beautiful.

Plural Subject Pronoun Examples

The examples below demonstrate proper usage of **plural subject pronouns**, which include **we** and **they**. The word **you** sometimes function as this type of pronoun.

- **We** are planning a vacation.
- **They** will be visiting Florida soon.
- I like your family. **You** are a great group.

Singular Object Pronoun Examples

The following examples illustrate each of the **singular object pronouns**, which are **him**, **her** and **me**. **It** and **you** sometimes function as this type of pronoun.

- She told her deepest secret to **him**.
- You should explain the procedure to **her**.
- Susie made **me** laugh.
- You should give **it** to mom.
- I am bringing a pie to **you** tomorrow.

Plural Object Pronoun Examples

The examples below demonstrate proper usage of **plural object pronouns**, which include **us** and **them**. The word **you** sometimes function as this type of pronoun.

- Grandma is visiting **us** next month.
- Explain what you did to **them**.
- As my siblings, you mean the world to me. I hope you know how much I love **you**.

Person (First, Second and Third Person)

Each subject and object pronoun falls under a particular "person," consistent with general usage of personal pronouns.

First Person Examples

The first person pronouns are **I**, **we**, **me**, and **us**. **I** and **we** are subject pronouns, while **me** and **us** are object pronouns. When you are talking about something that happened to you or something you did, you would use a first person pronoun.

- **I** am surprised by the result. (subject pronoun in first person singular)
- **We** are looking forward to vacation. (subject pronoun in first person plural)
- What did you say to **me**? (object pronoun in first person singular)
- Did he lie to **us**? (object pronoun in first person plural)

Second Person Examples

The word **you** is the only second person pronoun. It can be a subject or an object pronoun and it can be plural or singular. If you are speaking to someone or about someone, you would use a second person pronoun.

- **You** are responsible for your own actions, Susie. (subject pronoun in first person singular)
- **You** are the best brothers and sisters anyone could have. (subject pronoun in first person plural)
- I gave fresh vegetables to **you** last week. (object pronoun in first person singular)
- Friends, there are some things that need to be explained to **you**. (object pronoun in first person plural)

Third Person Examples

The third person pronouns are **she, he, her, him, it, them, they**, and **it**. She and he are singular subject pronouns. Her and him are singular object pronouns. **It** is singular and can be either an object or subject pronoun. The word **they** is a plural subject pronoun and the word **them** is a plural object pronoun. If you are talking about something that someone outside of the conversation did or that something was done to, you would use a third person pronoun.

- **She** is a very nice person. (subject pronoun in third person singular)
- **He** is quite trustworthy. (subject pronoun in third person singular)
- **It** is beautiful outside today. (subject pronoun in third person singular)
- That game belongs to **her**. (object pronoun in third person singular)
- What is she going to do about **him**? (object pronoun in third person singular)
- She lost yet another job. I'm not sure what to make of **it**. (object pronoun in third person singular)
- **They** are bringing my new puppy tomorrow. (subject pronoun in third person plural)
- Someone will need to explain what happened to **them**. (object pronoun in third person plural)

DEFINITE AND INDEFINITE ARTICLES

In English there are three articles: *a*, *an*, and *the*. Articles are used before nouns or noun equivalents and are a type of adjective. The definite article (*the*) is used before a noun to indicate that the identity of the noun is known to the reader. The indefinite article (*a*, *an*) is used before a noun that is general or when its identity is not known. There are certain situations in which a noun takes no article.

As a guide, the following definitions and table summarize the basic use of articles. Continue reading for a more detailed explanation of the rules and for examples of how and when to apply them.

Definite article

the (before a singular or plural noun)

Indefinite article

a (before a singular noun beginning with a consonant sound)

an (before a singular noun beginning with a vowel sound)

Count nouns - refers to items that can be counted and are either singular or plural

Non-count nouns - refers to items that are not counted and are always singular

	COUNT NOUNS	NON-COUNT NOUNS
Rule #1 Specific identity not known	<i>a, an</i>	(no article)
Rule #2 Specific identity known	<i>the</i>	<i>the</i>
Rule #3 All things <i>or</i> things in general	(no article)	(no article)

For the purposes of understanding how articles are used, it is important to know that nouns can be either **count** (can be counted) or **noncount** (indefinite in quantity and cannot be counted). In addition, count nouns are either **singular** (one) or **plural** (more than one). **Noncount** nouns are always in **singular** form. For example, if we are speaking of water that has been spilled on the table, there can be one drop (**singular**) or two or more drops (**plural**) of water on the table. The word *drop* in this example is a **count** noun because we can count the number of drops. Therefore, according to the rules applying to **count** nouns, the word *drop* would use the articles *a* or *the*.

However, if we are speaking of water in general spilled on the table, it would not be appropriate to count *one water* or *two waters* -- there would simply be water on the table. Water is a **noncount** noun. Therefore, according to the rules applying to **noncount** nouns, the word *water* would use *no article* or *the*, but not *a*. Following are the three specific rules which explain the use of definite and indefinite articles.

Rule #1 - Specific identity not known: Use the indefinite article a or an only with a singular count noun whose specific identity is not known to the reader. Use a before nouns that begin with a consonant sound, and use an before nouns that begin with a vowel sound.

- Use the article *a* or *an* to indicate any non-specified member of a group or category.

*I think **an** animal is in the garage*

*That man is **a** scoundrel.*

*We are looking for **an** apartment.*

- Use the article *a* or *an* to indicate one in number (as opposed to more than one).

*I own **a** cat and two dogs.*

- Use the article *a* before a consonant sound, and use *an* before a vowel sound.

a boy, **an** apple

◊ Sometimes an adjective comes between the article and noun:

an unhappy boy, **a** red apple

- The plural form of *a* or *an* is *some*. Use *some* to indicate an unspecified, limited amount (but more than one).

an apple, **some** apples

Rule #2 - Specific identity known: Use the definite article *the* with any noun (whether singular or plural, count or noncount) when the specific identity of the noun is known to the reader, as in the following situations:

- Use the article *the* when a particular noun has already been mentioned previously.

*I ate **an** apple yesterday. **The** apple was juicy and delicious.*

- Use the article *the* when an adjective, phrase, or clause describing the noun clarifies or restricts its identity.

***The** boy sitting next to me raised his hand.*

*Thank you for **the** advice you gave me.*

- Use the article *the* when the noun refers to something or someone that is unique.

***the** theory of relativity*

***the** 2003 federal budget*

Rule #3 - All things or things in general: Use no article with plural count nouns or any noncount nouns used to mean all or in general.

Trees are beautiful in the fall. (All trees are beautiful in the fall.)

He was asking for advice. (He was asking for advice in general.)

I do not like coffee. (I do not like all coffee in general.)

Additional Information Regarding the Use of Articles

- When indicating an unspecified, limited amount of a **count** or **noncount** noun, use *some*.

*My cousin was seeking **some** advice from a counselor* (not advice in general or advice about everything, but a limited amount of advice).

*I would love **some** coffee right now* (not coffee in general, but a limited amount of coffee).

*We might get **rain** tomorrow.* Some rain would be good for the crops (a certain amount of rain, as opposed to rain in general).

*There are **some** drops of water on the table* (a limited number, but more than one drop).

- **Noncount nouns** are those which usually cannot be counted. Following are some common examples:

◇ **Certain food and drink items:** bacon, beef, bread, broccoli, butter, cabbage, candy, cauliflower, celery, cereal, cheese, chicken, chocolate, coffee, corn, cream, fish, flour, fruit, ice cream, lettuce, meat, milk, oil, pasta, rice, salt, spinach, sugar, tea, water, wine, yogurt

◇ **Certain nonfood substances:** air, cement, coal, dirt, gasoline, gold, paper, petroleum, plastic, rain, silver, snow, soap, steel, wood, wool

◇ **Most abstract nouns:** advice, anger, beauty, confidence, courage, employment, fun, happiness, health, honesty, information, intelligence, knowledge, love, poverty, satisfaction, truth, wealth



♦ **Areas of study:** history, math, biology, etc.

♦ **Sports:** soccer, football, baseball, hockey, etc.

♦ **Languages:** Chinese, Spanish, Russian, English, etc.

♦ **Other:** clothing, equipment, furniture, homework, jewelry, luggage, lumber, machinery, mail, money, news, poetry, pollution, research, scenery, traffic, transportation, violence, weather, work

- Geographical names are confusing because some require the and some do not.

♦ **Use *the* with:** united countries, large regions, deserts, peninsulas, oceans, seas, gulfs, canals, rivers, mountain ranges, groups of islands

the Gobi Desert

the United Arab Emirates

the Sacramento River

the Aleutians

♦ **Do not use the with:** streets, parks, cities, states, counties, most countries, continents, bays, single lakes, single mountains, islands

Japan

Chico

Mt. Everest

San Francisco Bay



Examples of the Use of Articles

*I do not want **a** gun in my house* (any gun).

***The** gun is in his closet* (implies there is a specific gun).

*I am afraid of **guns*** (all guns in general).

*She sent me **a** postcard from Italy* (an unspecific postcard - not a letter, not an e-mail).

*It's **the** postcard that I have in my office* (one specific postcard).

Getting postcards makes me want to travel (any postcard in general).

*I have **a** dog* (one dog).

***The** dog is very friendly* (the dog that I have already mentioned).

Dogs make great pets (dogs in general).

Greta needs furniture in her apartment (furniture is a noncount noun).

*She is going to select **the** furniture that she needs* (the specific furniture that she needs).

*She hopes to find **some** furniture this weekend* (an unspecified, limited amount of furniture).

*We are going to see **the** Statue of Liberty this weekend* (the only Statue of Liberty).